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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a study that explored the personal concerns of student teachers, how they viewed their apprenticeship and their hidden perspectives. A description is given of how information was obtained about the way four students viewed their field experiences. Journals, daily narratives of students' reactions to teaching experiences, provided one source of information. The concerns that emerged were in the areas of: (1) view of work; (2) attitude toward situations in which the student was involved; (3) personal relations with pupils, peers, and supervisors; (4) feelings about practical classroom skills; (5) investment and commitment to teaching; and (6) assessment of self, others, and the system. Interviews were also conducted with the student trainees and their supervisors. Results indicated that student teachers have differing perceptions, different concerns, and different priorities regarding teaching and field work practice. Their perspectives about their experiences changed as they moved through a series of field experiences. Implications for student teacher supervisors and evaluators are discussed. (JD)

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PRESERVICE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT: STUDYING A PERSONAL LANDSCAPE

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PRESERVICE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT:
STUDYING A PERSONAL LANDSCAPE

Many Colleges of Education have instituted exit interviews to assess the weakness and strengths of particular teacher preparation programs. Evidence is extracted from student trainees in a post test fashion, because the assumption is the trainee has experienced the program and therefore must be able to critique it. Perhaps that is true...maybe not.

At Towson State we have a similar plan for program assessment and have found the typical responses from trainees: some is good, there are a few problems and overall it's o.k. Undergraduates say: "Don't change too much, but if you do...increase the field work and cut back on the methods." Professors usually respond: "It's impossible to set up more field work...we've got to have something for the methods people to teach... so we'll leave it alone. Besides, it's not too bad according to the trainees." Thus the program sits.

But, when we take time to discuss with individuals the results of their work, we sometimes find perplexing statements. For example, one student professed after finishing her student teaching to being low in assurance and hesitant about even seeking a teaching positon. But her supervisor touted her as being outstanding! Questions need to be posed.

Most teacher educators have experienced the situation where outstanding students - even award nominees - have struggled and even crumpled in the first year of teaching! What went wrong, we ask? Did we misjudge the situation? Is it because new variables are involved, or is it because we didn't know as much as we

should about the conditions of the apprenticeship, the personal concerns, the hidden perspectives of trainees?

Ten years ago, I did a content analysis of supervisory evaluations (narratives) and found almost nothing in these about the patterns of evolvement, the constriction points, or the critical experiences in the apprenticeship (Barbour, 1979). One can posit that the summarizers did not want to betray to employers the problems the trainees had, but now I wonder if perhaps supervisors are oblivious to much of the information. In recent years I have become more convinced of the the latter, and I am more certain that Fuller (1969) accurately pointed out that there are many parts of the teacher training puzzle that we neglect or just do not see. But finding out that information can make so much difference in the future of individuals.

One place to start is looking at the trainee in a deliberate and descriptive way. These folks know something - lots about who they are and how things work for them. We should be able to confide in them and share what we have found.

But, we live in a hierarchial society which too often limits the interactions of one group and another. This extends to students and their professors. Professors rarely think to use the insights or the perceptions of their own students to clarify or discover the roots of problems...or even the questions.!

This paper focuses on several procedures used by the researchers in a qualitative study on the "profiles" of teachers-in-training. Below, I consider the sources of information,

thoughts on how they interface, and the value each rendered. I conclude with impressions for helping and understanding novices and questions that are extant.

WHERE DID WE GO FOR INFORMATION?

With a small group of volunteers enrolled in the Towson State field experience program, the researchers probed for two semesters for information about concerns and reactions to induction. It was a speculative time and we learned as we proceeded with various measures to figure out the ways students were viewing their experiences. The following is a description of the "windows" we used in this preliminary study and our judgments about the views they presented.

Journals. We used journals since these tend to open up a lot of information about day to day life. We convinced students to maintain these for their two major field experiences. It appeared to be a reasonable strategy to get more data about the lives of teachers-in-training.

The journals were narratives that students kept while they were in the last two phases of our ELED program. Each day that subjects participated at a school - they wrote a page or so of notes (almost a diary). Occasionally instructors/supervisors gave a prompt, but mostly the subjects were reacting to: "What is happening in my school life".

Initial results encouraged us to proceed with an analyis scheme for processing the information received. We read through the journals, became acquainted with the situations, and

established a scheme to find patterns in the journals. We categorized information in a preliminary manner while searching the first journal, then revamped the scale after working with others. It would be fair to say it was adjusted after each journal analysis. In this way we identified several domains that represent and the essence for the set of journals, and permit us to make general comparisons between these. The main categories that emerged are:

View of Work	**Assessment**
Attitude	**Practical Skills**
Personal Relations	**Investment**

Each category has from four to eight sub-categories (see Apprendix I). See Barbour & Holmes (1987) for a complete explanation of the categories.

Results. Findings from these were revealing views on the concerns of teachers-in-training. All trainees showed similar profiles for some of the main categories, i.e., high on attitude features and low on commitment. But there were differences in others, i.e., three had only a moderate concern with assessment whereas one was very high. View of work (theory to practice ideas) is high for three but low for another. Concern for practical skills and public relations is varied.

When we looked at these same categories in student teaching journals, a fairly similar profile for each trainee emerged (See Fig 1). And later in an interview after student teaching was over, the perceptions changed again...so that quite a different profile existed. Some areas seem to be similar but others

changed dramatically, i.e., Assessment for Student C, and View of Work for Student D.

This all points perhaps to the individual character of the trainees. See Figure 1 for four profiles for first and second field experiences of the four subjects in the study.

Personal Records. In campus files there are bits of information that suggest what teachers-in-training are like. Previous work experiences, samples of work, and autobiographical material give cues to the persons' interests, commitments, habits, and attitudes. We used the following records in trying to define a background for persons in the study, and to correlate with findings from journals.

(a) Autobiographical statement. The essay written by the student in his/her introductory education class (sophomore year), and revised in the first general field experience . It generally reveals superficially what has transpired in the student's life. The journey as a high school and college student is noted and what her/his expectations are comes out. Inklings about the personality can be found , but only occasionally do we find one that is introspective. With the exception of commitment to teaching, which is inversely related to journal entrys , the information provided does not clarify the information in journals. (b) Personal evaluation. From time to time during the undergraduate program, students do self-evaluations to indicate their perceptions of progress in selected teaching skills, such as management and planning. On the whole, these tend to resemble the supervisor's evaluations done at the same time.

The focus for both parties is on the attainment of certain competencies listed in syllabi or on forms. No one indicates the development process and indeed there is no place on forms to indicate concerns, priorities and the like. Example: Subject C notes in her self-evaluation:

"I learned a lot about good lessons in just one semester. I think I'll probably be learning about lessons for a long time to come."

(c) Projects. Several units of study, developed by the trainees as requirements in courses, are included in professional folders. For instance, there is at least one case study done by the trainee. Directions for completion are very complete, and little is left for interpretation. Therefore, it is difficult to find information revealing the insights or concerns of individuals. Lesson plans - there are several of these - are always done in a prescribed format. No where is there indication of theory to practice connections that may have been processed by the subject. The information revealed is work style, knowledge of subject, and logic of the lesson objectives.

This project information does give clues to a trainee's work habits, her response to assignments and at times to her creativity. But there is little to presage any problems or pitfalls that could arise or an orientation to the act of teaching. Commitment, communication style, attitudes, and views on teaching are not revealed in the personal records of these students. One folder resembles another closely.

Interviews with Student-Trainees. The post student teaching

interviews used in this preliminary study were helpful in extending the ideas from the journals. Not surprisingly, some information was different, since the subjects had matured and were looking forward to teaching. The interviews took place after student teaching and our objective was to verify the positions indicated in the last journals. Interviewers used the domains extracted earlier from the journals as a basis for questions in the interview.

Some results were not expected. The subjects produced new profiles at this time. The only strong correlation that we could discern for any is in the area of practical skills.

We concluded that the time lapse and intervening experiences had had a considerable effect on the trainees, and perhaps not all for the good when considering the narrowing of views shown below. An example of views on a discipline sequence shows one subject moving in a non-professional way.

a. Subject C noted in her first journal when commenting about a boy's acting out, "...his stepfather had beat up his mother, so,...this was an anger stage that he was going through."

b. Subject C said in second journal (student teaching): "David

(class bully) was in tears as I straightened out the lunch mix up. I couldn't believe the state he was in. Perhaps I witnessed a true weak spot in David, eh?"

c. Subject C noted in interview when commenting on task of bring order to the room: "But, nothing I learned in my

classes...really applied."

The interviews appeared personally satisfying and pleasant interchanges. All trainees responded well and viewed the activity positively. We concluded that doing interviews should be continued in any study such as this one and should be done more often, for one has a chance to get more information than the stark facts extracted by questionnaires. Some positive features are: (1) allows for probing and delving into specifics, (2) allows for redirection and refinements, and (3) keeps the meeting personal. Some potential drawbacks are: (1) testimony tends to be repetitious, (2) spontaneity can carry conversation far from the topic, and (3) recalled data (spanning months of time) directs respondents to the dramatic events and all too often to the concluding experiences. One does not get a comprehensive picture in this way - interviews should be done at least twice in each semester to keep a reasonable picture of experience.

Recommendation. In studies of this type, interviews would be most helpful if done in a periodic way throughout the field work. The information then would be helpful in considering and probing the journal input. If one is to clarify items in a journal, then one must arrange interviews regularly (perhaps once every two weeks) and not simply at the end of the experience.

Interviews with Supervisory Personnel. The researchers attempted to find, by interviewing supervisors, any evidence showing that instructors were alert to the general profiles of trainees as presented in the domains from journals. These were in all cases post-experience interviews, and the

interview questions were developed from categories found in journals.

The perceptions of supervisors for most features were very different than the information revealed from the trainees'journals. Seemingly supervisors were quite unaware of what the concerns and priorities were in these student-trainees experiences.

The supervisory interview discourse gave evidence of an evaluative penchant. They reflected almost without exception about students' efforts over a total period - drawing the "big picture" of a subject's work. Example: In commenting on the attitude domain for Subject C, Supervisor C notes: "She enjoys teaching very much. Very bubbly and outgoing. Always had a smile for me and the teacher she worked with." There was no information on her value of attitude, her concern with its function, or her recognition of this feature in the classroom.

Even the strategy of clarifying interview questions and trying to get supervisors to reflect on the notion of trainee perceptions almost always ended up with a focus on product. Maybe that is indicative of the supervisory mind set, i.e., evaluate the performance! If interviews were set up on a periodic basis, i.e., monthly during the field experience, maybe a focus on perceptions of the trainee for that particular month would emerge.

Only in the area of Practical Skills is there similarity between student trainee journals and supervisory comment. In areas such as Assessment, View of work and Commitment the

information is more often exactly opposite. For example, the trainees who exhibited minimal concern about Assessment are rated as highest in that by their supervisors. (Caution: we think it is often a misinterpretation.)

Evaluations. The supervisory evaluations of trainees' field experiences were considered for content to relate to information provided by the subjects studied. These assessments are collected, for the three semesters of field work, to discern progress on the part of the student being trained.

In two cases these are check lists and focus on the end product for the semester - not on the process of becoming. While they do present a continuum of expectations for the program, they shed little light on the particulars of placement or the concerns of the students. They serve as a quide post.

The third evaluation is a narrative essay explaining the trainee's work during student teaching and qualifications at the end. Again these, without exception, described the outcome of student teaching experience and not the process of becoming or elements of the subject's personal orientation.

How do evaluations interface with other measures and information? The final evaluations by supervisors related well to the information gathered from personal interviews with college supervisors. This indicates that competencies are reasonably well established and the instructors are consistent in reflecting information. This is encouraging from a reliablibity viewpoint.

There is however a considerable amount of similar language in college supervisor comments on end-of-semester evaluations.

The impression that one gets, after reading several, is that a common situation exists for most trainees. And yet the journal profiles reveal quite different situations. It is unfortunate that narrative evaluations tend to take on a repetitive quality, for it means they add little to the checklists they were designed to replace.

We compared the self evaluations that students had done of their teaching experiences and the statements that their supervising teachers had done for them. We found that while there are some common elements, supervisors often do not attend to the confusion or irritation of the trainees. Subject C for example became annoyed with the unwillingness of her supervising teacher to permit her to "take charge". The supervisor uses words like "she is cooperative and dependable", while Subject C notes, "I know what I can do! I can manage this room."

Other. One can speculate that there are more pieces of the puzzle that would have helped in explaining the lives of the subjects, but we did not have access to them.

Field notes from supervisory personnel is one item missing from our data bank. We were unable to find any that the supervisors had made during the experiences. These would be valuable to relate to the content of journals.

WHAT WE LEARNED

1. The trainees in this study have differing perceptions, different concerns, and different priorities regarding teaching and field work practice. They are quite different people.
2. Perspectives about their experiences changed as these trainees

moved through a series of field experiences. There seems to be an ebb and flow in the domains we followed. What is important at one point becomes much less important at a later time.

3. The trainees and their supervisors have different "viewing points" about teaching development.

4. There are several "windows" for viewing perceptions about teaching experiences; some appear better than others in rendering information. For instance, journals are helpful for revealing "viewing points" of student-trainees. Interviews should help in a similar way if they are developed in a scheduled manner. Personal records and evaluations provide some qualifications, but are not likely to correlate with information from journals and interviews.

5. The supervisors involved in this study tend to develop an evaluative focus when responding to questions about their trainees. This contrasts with the function of mentor or guide that the teacher preparation program champions.

RECOMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

If we as trainers of teachers seek to get at the concerns of trainees and arrange for growth through processing needs and concerns, then we need to consider the "windows" that provide this information. Much is hidden, and there is indication from this preliminary study that it does not surface by itself.

While student-trainees and supervisors agree on many objectives, principles, and evaluation methods, the "viewing points" for these two groups are not the same. Priorities for one group appears quite out of focus for the other. For example,

one graduating student indicates: "I need more practice with management, give me more ideas." At the same time her supervising professor was stating that the prime focus should be "observation and reflection will provide the most answers".

One can rationalize by saying the knowledgeable supervisor sees the over all and uses the big picture to focus on weekly problems or concerns. But does she/he? We can say, that by maintaining a general perspective of the profession, the supervisor can guide the student. But obviously, some of this guidance depends on his/her work with and understanding of the trainees.

Can we expect commonality of perspectives for trainee and supervisor? That is probably unnecessary, but the process of teacher preparation must move beyond the rules and codes of competence, so that supervisors make connections to their students' insights and concerns through qualitative devices.

During a recent presentation at Towson State, Nancy Atwell explained about making connections with young writers. She said that she had moved through three phases in promoting growth in the creations of her students. Her first was showing them "what to do", the second was taking cues from the students on how to best help them, and the third phase is now "what we can do together". As supervisors of teachers in training are we still at Ms. Atwell's first stage?

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Appendix I

CATEGORY SYSTEM FOR JOURNAL ENTRIES

VIEW OF WORK

- Indicate theory to practice
- Reflects on child development
- Notes problem sense
- Reflection on teaching/planning
- Interprets child behavior
- Notes organization of class
- Contrasts teaching situations
- Getting "handle" on the work

PRACTICAL SKILLS

- Idea gain
- Idea confusion
- Something works or doesn't work
- Fitting into system
- Observation/description of an idea or skill

ATTITUDE

- Positive reaction to situation
- Frustration or negative reaction to situation
- Anxiety, suspicion or doubt about situation
- Empathy with other
- Objective outlook

INVESTMENT

- Indicates missionary zeal and spirit
- States a commitment to teaching
- Indicates concern over drive/interest
- Notes negative drive

PERSONAL RELATIONS

- Friendly or negative interaction with child
- Friendly or negative interaction with teacher
- Interacts with parents or others
- Reflects on problems with others

ASSESSMENT

- Assesses self (positive or negative)
- Assesses others
- Assesses the system
- Notes assessment from others

Fig. 1: PROFILES OF SUBJECTS' JOURNAL ENTRIES